

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.758
6 March 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 6 March 1997, at 10 a.m.

President:

Mr. Grecu

(Romania)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I call to order the 758th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On my list of speakers I have the representatives of Cyprus and Mexico. However, before giving them the floor I would like to inform you that at the end of this plenary meeting I intend to hold a brief session of informal Presidential consultations open to participation by all delegations, at which I would like to pass on to you the preliminary results of the bilateral consultations which I have had with the members of the Conference concerning our programme of work and the organization of the session, following the adoption of the agenda.

As you know, the representative of Germany, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann, is leaving the Conference following his appointment as Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Ambassador Hoffmann has represented his Government at the Conference for more than four years with competence and talent, upholding the positions of his country with courage and authority. We all recall the personal contribution which he made in 1993 when he chaired the Ad Hoc Committee on Prohibition of an Arms Race in Outer Space. I would also like to stress the major role which Ambassador Hoffmann played in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1994 in the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee's Working Group on Verification. We are also familiar with the contribution that he made as a Friend of the Chair during the final phase of negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, especially in the preparation of the document on the Preparatory Commission. Finally, I need hardly stress the way in which he presided over the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission last year. Therefore, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I would like to wish Ambassador Hoffmann every success in his new responsibilities and assure him of our friendship.

I would also like to convey, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, a cordial welcome to the representatives of non-governmental organizations present in the public gallery today. As you know, International Women's Day will be celebrated on 8 March, and to mark that event, in accordance with established practice, the community of non-governmental organizations will address a message to the Conference. I am sure that the Conference joins me in expressing our best wishes to all the women present in the room today and telling them that we greatly appreciate their steadfast commitment for peace and disarmament as well as their continued interest in our efforts.

Now I would like to give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, who will read their message to the Conference.

Mr. PETERWUSEY (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): I have the privilege to bring to your attention the following message from the International Women's Day and Disarmament Seminar to the Conference on Disarmament. I quote:

"Esteemed delegates,

"We are women from 32 countries, representing all continents, gathered in Geneva to discuss nuclear disarmament as our way to mark International Women's Day.

"We are glad that the Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force by 29 April, and we urge those Governments who have not done so already to ratify this treaty. Furthermore, we recognize that START I and START II were significant steps on the road to nuclear disarmament, and we call on the United States of America and the Russian Federation to move to START III.

"Our International Women's Disarmament Seminars have for many years dealt with different aspects of the work of the Conference on Disarmament. This time we are focusing on nuclear disarmament which we consider of the utmost importance particularly in this year for the following reasons:

"Firstly, in 1996 the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty banning the testing of nuclear weapons in all environments for all time was signed. We congratulate the Conference on Disarmament on the completion of the CTBT and urge those States that have nuclear weapons or nuclear power plants to sign and to ratify it. We regret however that the treaty does not inhibit laboratory testing, therefore allowing further research and development of nuclear weapons to continue, and regret the absence of a concrete link to the wider goals of nuclear disarmament. For us, women peace activists from many countries who have mobilized and lobbied to stop nuclear testing, it is important that the CTBT Organization in Vienna will start its work soon. We will continue to monitor the ongoing work of the CTBTO to oversee the implementation and verification of the treaty. We wish success to those who are involved in this week's conference to establish the CTBTO and urge them to make provisions for constructive interactions with NGOs.

"Secondly, in 1996 the International Court of Justice declared that a 'threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law'.

"Thirdly, also last year, the Canberra Commission report on the elimination of nuclear weapons outlined a step-by-step programme for the abolition of nuclear weapons, stating that 'the only complete defence is the elimination of nuclear weapons and assurance that they will never be produced again'.

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference
on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the
Secretary-General of the United Nations)

"We call on you to use the momentum generated by these important events to take concrete action in 1997 on nuclear disarmament and to respond to the worldwide movement of people and public institutions demanding that all nuclear-weapon Powers reduce their arsenals to zero. More and more people are speaking out on what the peace movement has been saying for decades - namely that nuclear weapons diminish rather than increase military security. Like the chemical and biological weapons conventions, the time has come for a nuclear weapons convention.

"The fifty-first United Nations General Assembly called upon States to begin negotiations in 1997 on a nuclear weapons convention which would provide for nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, and you have put nuclear disarmament as the first item on your agenda this year. We call on you to take the next step and establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to begin concrete negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention.

"We are conscious of the fact that the 21,000 nuclear weapons currently on our planet cannot be removed overnight. However, if the Governments are committed to transform the declared opposition to nuclear weapons into concrete political action, many ways can be found to reach complete nuclear disarmament within a reasonable time-frame. The April 1997 Preparatory Committee meeting of the States party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty will begin a new review process of the Treaty. Our hopes are high that this new review process, in line with the 'Principles and objectives' document agreed upon at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT, will be an important instrument to bring nuclear disarmament closer. It could serve as a powerful support to the CD in negotiating a nuclear weapons convention. We can assure you of our support in these efforts. We are very active in preparing for the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in New York, raising public awareness for this important meeting which we hope can contribute to the work of the CD.

"A comprehensive cut-off of fissile material would strengthen the existing non-proliferation regime and provide important progress towards the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Any attempt to control the potential use of weapon-usable material for weapon purposes has to include both military and civilian weapon-usable materials. We encourage you to continue with your efforts to establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty on the cut-off of nuclear-weapons-grade fissile material which includes an inventory of stockpiles.

"Finally we urge you again to consider enlarging the role of NGOs in the work of the CD. Our work represents the voices of many women around the world who are active at local and national levels working to strengthen awareness and action on disarmament. We would like to thank you for receiving our message once again. We wish you strength and all the energy for the work ahead of you. We can assure you of our full support."

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for reading the message from the community of non-governmental organizations on the occasion of International Women's Day. I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand, Ambassador Armstrong, on behalf of the Western Group.

Mr. ARMSTRONG (New Zealand): Mr. President, may I first, on behalf of my colleagues in the Western Group, join you in extending to a distinguished member of our group, Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany, our warm thanks for his considerable achievements during his time in Geneva, and our congratulations on his new role. We share fully the sentiments which you yourself have eloquently expressed in this regard, and we extend our best wishes to Ambassador Hoffmann, both as a colleague and as a friend.

On behalf of the members of the Western Group, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the organizations which have joined the CD today to mark International Women's Day. In particular, our thanks go to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom for the message of encouragement contained in the address read by the Secretary-General. We have noted with special interest the points made about the ongoing efforts in this body to secure its work programme for 1997. A wide range of non-governmental organizations is associated with the statement we have just heard. The seminars they organize and their publications demonstrate clearly the interest which the work of this Conference continues to attract. Their ongoing work reminds us of our responsibilities in the field of arms control and disarmament.

Mr. de ICASA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time since you took over the post of President, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincerest congratulations to you. I should also like to express our satisfaction at the recent selection of Ambassador Hoffmann to head the secretariat for the CTBTO. We will miss his timely statements and his admirable legal judgement in this body. Our loss is the CTBT's gain. We wish our friend Ambassador Hoffmann all the very best for himself and his family in Vienna.

On behalf of the Group of 21 I would like to thank Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, for reading the message from the community of non-governmental organizations on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March. On behalf of the Group of 21 I would like to thank the non-governmental organizations in question for their support for the cause of disarmament and the interest they have expressed in our work. In my Group we acknowledge the leading role which women play in the movement for peace, and we wish to assure them that all the delegations in the Group of 21 are firmly committed to general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

We take this opportunity to congratulate all the distinguished women who head or belong to delegations in the Conference on Disarmament, those working in the secretariat, and those in the interpretation booths who make our

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negotiations possible. Lastly, allow me to congratulate all women in non-governmental organizations for their statement today and for the support and encouragement for the positions taken by the Group of 21, particularly with respect to the objective of bringing about a world free from nuclear weapons.

Mr. NARAY (Hungary): I also would like to join those colleagues who have congratulated Ambassador Hoffmann on his election as head of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We wish him success in his new responsible post.

As was the case last year, the honour to make a statement on the occasion of International Women's Day on behalf of the Eastern European regional group is bestowed on my delegation. I can hardly find any more attractive task than to do this.

The Hungarian delegation has the honour to welcome, on behalf of the Eastern European Group in the Conference on Disarmament, the message from non-governmental organizations. We thank them for their interest and support they have given to our work. On behalf of my Group, the Hungarian delegation would like to convey to the representatives of the women's international organizations, as well as all women heads and members of delegations, secretariat staff and interpreters, our heartfelt congratulations on the eve of International Women's Day.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): First of all the Chinese delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ambassador of Germany, Mr. Hoffmann on being selected as the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO. His rich diplomatic experience and skills as well as his style of getting things done have left a very deep impression on all of us. The Chinese delegation fully believes that under his leadership the work of the future Provisional Technical Secretariat will proceed effectively. We wish him success in his work.

In two days it will be International Women's Day. The Chinese delegation as the Group of 1 in the CD wants to take this opportunity to express its warm congratulations to all women colleagues in the CD, ladies who are observing the proceedings of our meeting in the public gallery and women members of the secretariat who have worked so diligently for us. As an old Chinese saying goes, "If you do not respect women then you are not respecting your mother. If you do not respect your mother then you are not showing filial affection." Those who do not show filial affection will be unwelcome in society. They will even be spurned. As another saying in modern-day China goes "Women hold up half the sky." In fact, in all areas of endeavour, including disarmament, arms control and international peace and security, women have made an equally important contribution. The Chinese delegation wishes all ladies here health and happiness in their own lives and their family lives and hopes that they will be even more deeply involved in our work on disarmament and arms control so as to make a greater contribution to the safeguarding of international peace and security.

Mr. ZACKHEOS (Cyprus): The main purpose of my intervention is to express our hope and expectation that the pace of the substantial work of our Conference will be accelerated.

My Government greatly appreciates the enormous efforts made by the previous President and yourself, Sir, for finding a way to overcome existing difficulties. We realize, however, that progress can only be achieved if there is political will from all countries and groups of countries for a compromise. After all, compromise and negotiation are the essence of multilateral diplomacy.

A cut-off treaty on fissile material production is a logical step following the signing of the CTBT and should be given our utmost attention. The conclusion of the CTBT was an event of historic consequence. Countries that have signed should now intensify their ratification process. At the same time, we should stay in close touch with the countries that did not find it possible to sign. I wish to observe that the awareness of the inherent dangers in nuclear testing has been raised in our societies and it will be almost impossible for any country to conduct a nuclear explosion taking into account the consequences, including adverse world public opinion.

Equally important is the negotiation of an agreement banning anti-personnel landmines. The CD, without minimizing the importance of other forums and their possible positive contribution in furthering our common goal, guarantees that adequate consideration is given to all aspects and to all the preoccupations of actors in the international scene. My Government supports, in principle, the destruction of all anti-personnel mines placed along the ceasefire line in Cyprus, on condition of reciprocity. Let me underline that in situations of conflict, ratification of relevant arms control and disarmament agreements by all countries involved is a necessary prerequisite for their universal application.

Cyprus has, over the years, consistently supported the objective of complete and general disarmament, which addresses the security concerns of small States like ours, and we would welcome any efforts which will advance this noble cause. Cyprus was in the forefront of countries in the United Nations advocating consideration of the relationship between disarmament and development.

The first major achievement of the CD was the conclusion of the Convention on Chemical Weapons. It is a source of gratification that the Convention will enter into force on 29 April 1997. At the same time, it goes without saying that for the Convention to be fully effective it should have universal support and be ratified by all, including permanent members of the Security Council. Ratification by the major Powers will be a big boost to this historic disarmament and non-proliferation treaty, which totally prohibits chemical weapons including the means of their delivery. We believe that assistance, both technical and financial, for the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles should be provided to countries in need.

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We also support the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention through an effective verification mechanism.

I wish to take this opportunity to underline the importance of the proposal of President Clerides for the complete demilitarization of the Republic of Cyprus, which we consider as our contribution to efforts for conventional weapons disarmament. This proposal represents a genuine answer to the security concerns of all Cypriots. Moreover, its implementation will lead to stability in our sensitive region. The proposal has received widespread international support. We express the hope that serious consideration will be given to it in the efforts for finding a just solution to the Cyprus problem in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

Turning now to the issue of the enlargement of membership of the Conference, I wish to join previous speakers in urging the appointment, as soon as possible, of a special coordinator. I believe that in the new international environment opportunities should be given to countries that wish to make a positive contribution to the work of the Conference. After all, the main activity of the CD is the elaboration of relevant conventions and treaties which we are all asked to sign and ratify.

In conclusion, on this auspicious occasion, on the eve of International Women's Day, I wish to place on record our appreciation to all women's NGOs for their untiring efforts and moral weight they bring in the field of disarmament.

I extend also our congratulations to Ambassador Hoffmann on his appointment and our best wishes for every success in his difficult but so important task.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Cyprus for his statement and kind words to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico, Ambassador de Icaza.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): The delegation of Mexico expresses its satisfaction that the Conference, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, has achieved consensus on its agenda for this year, following four weeks of intensive negotiations ably conducted by your predecessor, Mr. President, Ambassador Sun of the Republic of Korea. It is our understanding that the consensus achieved means that, as long as the consultations on the review of the agenda have not been concluded and without prejudging their results, the objectives, priorities and principles laid down in the 1978 document must continue to guide our negotiations and must be respected in the preparation of our programme of work. Although our agenda for this year contains seven items, we know that in practice the Conference could not simultaneously carry on negotiations on each and every one of them. In fact it is doubtful whether the Conference is capable of pursuing and bringing to a conclusion more than one set of negotiations at a time. Hence

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the need not to waste our limited resources by undertaking tasks which are not among the highest priorities or which would duplicate efforts undertaken in other multilateral forums.

Nuclear disarmament measures have the highest priority under the terms of the Final Document, which, as we have agreed, must guide our endeavours. It has been said that given the fact that the end of the cold war has reduced the threat of a nuclear holocaust, nuclear disarmament no longer deserves such a high priority. In this regard it must be pointed out that although the threat of a nuclear holocaust has diminished, no one can guarantee for how long, and it will persist as long as nuclear weapons continue to exist. But furthermore let us point out that in addition to the nightmare of the possible annihilation of mankind as a result of a global nuclear war, nowadays increasing concern has arisen regarding the reliability and safety of nuclear arsenals, and there is genuine alarm with respect to the control of the technology and the materials involved in the production of nuclear weapons. The risk of unauthorized or accidental launches has increased, and we are as close to possible catastrophes as we were during the East-West confrontation.

With admirable foresight, the authors of the Final Document declared that measures of nuclear disarmament should have the highest priority "until the total elimination of nuclear weapons ... has been achieved". International public opinion, organized civil society and the majority of the Member States of the United Nations have undertaken and taken a variety of initiatives with a view to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in what is starting to resemble a general mobilization for the delegitimization of such weapons, the demonstration of the anachronistic nature of the doctrines which underpin them and the awakening of a new consciousness that existing arsenals continue to represent a threat to the very survival of mankind. In August last year, for instance, the Canberra Commission issued a report on the elimination of nuclear weapons which calls their military utility into question, highlights the risks of accidental or unauthorized use, affirms that possession stimulates proliferation and recommends practical and concrete measures for a realistic programme leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world. The report states that the first requirement is an unequivocal political commitment by the five nuclear-weapon States to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the immediate commencement of the necessary negotiations. We share that opinion. We also believe, as 61 retired generals and admirals from 17 different countries stated on 5 December 1996, that "we have been presented with a challenge of the highest possible historic importance - the creation of a nuclear-weapons-free world. The end of the cold war makes it possible. The dangers of proliferation, terrorism, and a new nuclear arms race render it necessary. We must not fail to seize our opportunity. There is no alternative".

However, the negotiation of measures related to nuclear disarmament are not only the highest priority in the sphere of disarmament, but also constitute an obligation. Let us recall that the International Court of Justice, in its historic advisory opinion of 8 July 1996, unanimously concluded that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects

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under strict and effective international control". The Court explained in sections 99 and 100 of its advisory opinion that the obligation contained in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is an obligation to achieve a precise result - nuclear disarmament in all its aspects - and that this twofold obligation to pursue and to conclude negotiations concerns all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or, in other words, the vast majority of the international community. According to the Court, any realistic search for nuclear disarmament necessitates the cooperation of all States. In order to comply with this binding obligation, and considering that nuclear disarmament has the highest priority in the negotiations on disarmament, the Group of 21 has been proposing in this sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

The Final Document states that the achievement of nuclear disarmament requires the negotiation of agreements on the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear-weapon systems, cessation of the production of all types of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery and of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes, and "a comprehensive, phased programme with agreed time-frames, whenever feasible, for progressive and balanced reduction of stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, leading to their ultimate and complete elimination at the earliest possible time". That is why, in March last year, the Group of 21 proposed that the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament should have as a mandate the negotiation of a phased programme of nuclear disarmament for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time. As you will remember, last year 28 delegations from member States of the Conference on Disarmament belonging to the Group of 21 presented a proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons, and the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 51/45 O, when calling upon this Conference to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, urged it to take the programme of action into account.

The cessation of the production of fissile material for weapons purposes must be a genuine disarmament measure, linked to the cessation of the production of all types of nuclear weapons, as the 1978 Final Document lays down. Ambassador Shannon's 1995 report and the implicit mandate contained therein should make it possible for the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to discuss the cessation of the production of fissile material for weapons purposes as well as the problem of past production and the management of existing stocks, so as to make sure that all production of nuclear weapons will cease.

To sum up, the delegation of Mexico considers that in the drafting of our programme of work the highest priority must continue to be given to nuclear disarmament, and that we should reach an agreement which takes into account the different concerns of the member States by constituting immediately an ad hoc committee with a wide mandate which could include, first, the negotiation of a legally binding multilateral agreement which unequivocally binds all States to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, secondly, the identification of measures necessary to achieve the complete

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elimination of nuclear weapons and the drafting of a phased programme with agreed time-frames, and lastly, the negotiation of a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes.

My delegation has listened with great interest to the statements made in the plenary of the Conference, and in informal meetings, regarding the urgent need for a total ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. We share the concern and sense of urgency inspiring those delegations which support a total ban on such weapons. The Government of Mexico considers that the use of this type of weapon constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and that the only real solution to the problems that it poses is the total abolition of anti-personnel landmines and the destruction of existing stockpiles. The Government of Mexico does not produce or import anti-personnel landmines and maintains strict and constant surveillance of Mexican firms or companies which use explosive material and does not grant any permits for the production of anti-personnel landmines. Mexico is among the countries which endorse the need to make progress as fast as possible towards the prohibition of such weapons in all its aspects, and accordingly it calls upon Governments to accede to and/or ratify, as the case may be, the 1980 United Nations Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its Protocols.

We have taken note with all due respect, since they have been put forward by delegations of countries with which Mexico has excellent and friendly relations, of the arguments in favour of negotiations on anti-personnel landmines being carried out by this Conference. Nevertheless, restrictions or prohibitions on conventional weapons which are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects should be negotiated in their proper context, which is that of the reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law in general and the 1980 Convention in particular, review conferences for which can and should be prepared for in ad hoc meetings, inter alia with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Conferences open to all are common practice in the field of international humanitarian law, and conferences expressly convened by individual countries have arrived at proscriptions and prohibitions on the use of conventional weapons which have secured universal acceptance. In the Ottawa Process we hope to conclude a legally binding international agreement this year to ban anti-personnel landmines and we are confident that, thanks to the snowball effect, we will establish a universal standard that will soon find general acceptance. We also hope that the Ottawa Process, in which we are actively participating, will not stop at the adoption of a legally binding instrument banning anti-personnel landmines but will continue as a group for the promotion of prohibitions on the use of or restrictions on other conventional weapons such as incendiary weapons, fuel-air explosives and munitions containing spent uranium, which could be considered in the next conference to review the 1980 Convention, scheduled to take place in four years' time.

The anti-personnel landmines crisis calls for urgent solutions. This Conference is not noted for the swiftness of its negotiations. Nor can it be

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said that the agreements we have arrived at here are assured of universality and the participation of "key States". Conventional disarmament can hardly be approached one weapon at a time, since, as the Final Document states, it must be carried out in a balanced and equitable manner so as not to allow any State or group of States to obtain advantages over others, and it should deal with balanced reductions of armed forces and of conventional weapons, with a view to promoting or strengthening stability at a lower military level. In contrast, bans on weapons that cause excessive suffering or have indiscriminate effects derive from the principle that belligerents should not cause their adversary damage out of proportion to the sole legitimate object of armed conflicts, which is to destroy or weaken the military potential of the enemy. Because the objectives which are pursued and the principles which are applicable are different in the field of disarmament and in the field of international humanitarian law, the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament entrusted the task of reaching agreement on conventional weapons which cause unnecessary suffering or have indiscriminate effects to a special conference of the United Nations, and not to this sole negotiating forum for disarmament. This forum has neither previous experience nor special expertise in humanitarian issues. As for the proposal that here in the Conference on Disarmament we should initiate gradual and phased negotiations on mines, the answer is that we have been doing so for the last 90 years, since The Hague Convention VIII relative to the Laying of Automatic Submarine Contact Mines. In 1974 Mexico proposed a ban on mines delivered from aircraft or remotely by artillery, since those are the mines which are used on a large scale in a scattered manner and have the most indiscriminate effects. In 1980 restrictions were placed on the use of landmines and in May last year, for the first time, the total prohibition of a landmine - the non-detectable anti-personnel landmine - was achieved. The time has come to ban all anti-personnel landmines, and to do so in the proper forum.

To sum up, as we stated in the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations, we are not convinced that this is an appropriate forum in which to complete as soon as possible negotiations on an agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. The Conference on Disarmament must give the highest priority to negotiations on nuclear disarmament and should not embark on exercises which duplicate efforts that are being successfully pursued in other forums and which would divert us from the responsibilities which the international community has entrusted to us.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this point?

Before adjourning this plenary, I would like to inform you that the next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Tuesday, 11 March 1997 at 10 a.m. At that plenary meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Mrs. Lena Hjelm-Wallén will address the Conference.

I give the floor to Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany.

Mr. HOFFMANN (Germany): As this will probably be my last formal plenary, I have the urge to have the last word. First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and colleagues for your very friendly words of adieu. Over the last four years we have done considerable work together and we have even had some success. I thank all colleagues for all the cooperation and friendship they have extended to me. I thank the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General of the CD for their assistance. I thank the members of the secretariat for all the diligent work into our cause. I am now crossing the line to their side of disarmament affairs. This will be an interesting new experience. I noted with interest that the NGOs intend to verify the verifiers also in Vienna. I am looking forward to this.

My predecessor, when he left the CD, had prepared a farewell speech on the wall paintings in this Council Chamber, but he never made this speech. I will not do so either. I have sat on all four sides of this Council Chamber and, therefore, it is really time to leave. But in doing so, I think it would be appropriate just to drink to the health of the CD with delegates, with members of the secretariat and with NGOs. You will find the barriers in the ante-room probably a little inconvenient, but they are there due to the housewife in the soul of the United Nations Administration: the carpet has to be protected. All the same, I am grateful to Vladimir Petrovsky that he made this venue possible, so I invite you all to have drinks with me after the meeting in the ante-room and, of course, as a private meeting will follow immediately, the NGOs will have the first go at the drinks. In this case, it means "ladies first".

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Hoffmann for his statement. I would remind you that after the end of this plenary meeting I will hold an open-ended informal session of Presidential consultations in this same room, after a brief pause.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.